

MAYOR & COUNCIL AGENDA COVER SHEET

MEETING DATE:

March 31, 2003

RESPONSIBLE STAFF:

Cindy Hines, Olde Towne
Coordinator

AGENDA ITEM:

(please check one)

	Presentation
	Proclamation/Certificate
	Appointment
	Public Hearing
	Historic District
	Consent Item
	Ordinance
	Resolution
	Policy Discussion
X	Work Session Discussion Item
	Other:

PUBLIC HEARING HISTORY:

(Please complete this section if agenda item
is a public hearing)

Introduced	
Advertised	
Hearing Date	
Record Held Open	
Policy Discussion	

TITLE:

Review of Design Alternatives for Proposed Olde Towne
Clock/Tower Plaza Project

SUPPORTING BACKGROUND:

As per their contract to provide a Schematic Design and Sitework Study for the proposed Olde Towne Clock Tower/Plaza project, Heath Design Group will present for review several different design alternatives of the plaza area. An initial Clock Tower/Plaza Design Meeting was held on January 29, 2003. Input gathered at that meeting was instrumental in providing design direction. Attached is a summary of the design meeting.

In addition to the design alternatives, Heath Design Group is also in the process of creating a 3-dimensional display that they hope to have ready in time for the presentation. The display will illustrate the height of the clock tower in regard to its surroundings. Additionally, they will have several boards depicting plaza elements, such as benches and materials for constructing decorative, low walls.

Based on input given and choices made at the meeting, Heath Design will work up a final design complete with cost estimate.

DESIRED OUTCOME:

Selection of final design and/or elements to work into final design.

Summary of Clock Tower/Plaza Presentation
Mayor and Council Work Session
March 31, 2003, 7:30 p.m.
Council Chambers, City Hall

Mark North, principal Heath Design Group and Vic Bryant of Macris, Hendricks and Glascock identified the project site and noted their efforts to utilize the site relative to existing structures and to design plans with an understanding of the context for future growth as well as compatibility with future projects.

In addition to boards depicting five design alternatives and landscaping elements, North presented a three-dimensional display designed to provide site context as well as height. Included were three tower models, purposely devoid of detail and scaled to range from 40 – 60 feet. North urged the group not to focus on the height of the tower as the three models were meant only to be used to represent placement and aid viewers in visualizing the proportions of the tower in regard to its surrounds.

Landscape Architect Bryant reviewed the site analysis and identified the following challenges: elevated noise levels from street traffic and trains; hot, dry conditions; little seating; no shelter; proximity to the parking lot and a minimal amount of landscaping. All five design alternatives presented took into account the need for shade (through trees and/or trellises), buffering, a water feature, increased landscaping, outdoor furnishings and, possibly, the addition of a sculpture. Bryant noted the need to “activate” the streetscape and indicated that the clock tower and water element, along with other additions, could make this a very inviting area. One suggestion was to have a fountain that actively tied in with the clock tower, setting forth sprays of water in synchronization with the clock. Landscaping elements presented included decorative bollards that doubled as light fixtures, planter walls, low brick walls and outdoor furniture in a variety materials and styles ranging from Victorian to modern.

In reviewing the design, much of the conversation focused on placement of the tower. Council member Henry Marraffa stated, “This is an urban park and having the tower at the end opens up the space for hosting small-scale events and accommodating artists, craftspeople and vendors.”

Mayor Katz expressed concern over the 18 wheelers that regularly challenge the current turning radius. Bryant acknowledged the concern and noted that Director of Public Works Jim Arnoult was working with a consultant in regard to the turning radius and traffic light synchronization. Mayor Katz inquired about designing around the existing poles and utility boxes. Bryant stated that the boxes could be moved and that there was a limited amount of movement possible with the poles as well. She also noted that the new poles would be decorative, not steel utility poles.

Council member Somerset voiced concerns regarding visibility for drivers and cautioned against plants and trees whose foliage could obstruct a driver’s view. Bryant assured the group that low plantings or larger trees would be used, avoiding problematic mid-sized

plants. It was also noted that low 18" walls used for seating would also act as a safety feature deterring children from darting out into the road.

Council member Alster inquired as to the dimensions of the plaza. It was stated that the plaza would be approximately 50' x 120'. (A subsequent review of plans put it closer to 40' x 120'.) Council member Alster stressed the need for a park that people would use.

In regard to other elements, Council member Somerset noted the need for a sign board that would direct people to Olde Towne businesses.

Opening the discussion up for public comment generated the following:

In addressing the tower's height, Olde Towne Advisory Committee member and resident David Shayt noted that the rule of thumb is to "go up 10 feet for every foot in diameter" putting the center line of the clock at between 40 and 50 feet. He emphasized that the center line through the dial was the most important measurement. Additionally, David discouraged the water feature saying that it would be too difficult to synchronize water works with an antique mechanical clock. Instead, he recommended a rocky stream feature that would serve to separate the parking lot from the plaza.

Historic Preservation Advisory Committee member Kathy Drzyzgula noted that she was pleased by the variety of designs and individual features presented and liked the interplay between the fountain and the clock. She stated that she favored alternatives #2 and #5 because they didn't emphasize the train station. She also noted that alternative #1 emphasized the rear of the train station. It was her feeling that the train station should be kept separate as a sign of respect for its historic designation. She also voiced concern that the plaza was too small. Noting that this area was the only central gathering place in Olde Towne, she cautioned against letting the issue of parking become an obstacle to expansion. In closing, Ms. Drzyzgula cited a lack of awareness among community members and suggested that the project needed to be more actively promoted.

Olde Towne Advisory Committee member and business owner Rodney Thompson expressed concern about the level of landscaping, noting that it looked too "heavy". He cautioned that over landscaping could cause safety and maintenance problems as large trees will sooner or later block the view of the clock. He also noted that some types of landscaping, such as bushes, tend to trap debris.

Olde Towne Advisory Committee member and resident Patrick Burke expressed concern about the hazard street trees might present to drivers and strongly suggested that they be eliminated along the roadside. Furthermore, he noted that street trees can also present obstacles to pedestrians as well as tripping hazards as they grow into the walkway and eventually crack the sidewalks. Mayor Katz agreed, noting that Olde Towne businesses have already requested the removal of problematic trees in front of their stores.

Alternately, Council member Somerset suggested that interesting, colorful umbrellas would provide shade and be useful in a light drizzle.

As the discussion would down, Council member Marraffa stated his preference for alternative #3 with the addition of a low wall for seating/safety. He noted that alternative #3 provided more of a “landscaping shield” from the adjoining parking lot. Furthermore, he noted that alternatives # 4 and #5, in which the “landscaping shield” had been “punched through” would be of benefit only a couple of times a year for special events that utilized the parking lot such as Olde Towne Day.

Council member Marraffa, noting that he was all for alternatives showing the clock at the far end of the plaza, requested a consensus from the Council. Council member Schlichting agreed that the clock tower would serve to anchor the corner.

Mayor Katz recommended moving the tower slightly to provide a safer turning radius for 18-wheel tractor trailers.

Council member Somerset favored alternative #5, noting that the clock could be repositioned to invite strolling around the plaza. Noting similarities between alternatives #3 and #5, she stated that she could be happy with either. In following up on Ms. Drzyzgula’s comment, Council member Somerset stressed the need to take a look at the actual total size of the plaza area and let that drive the design. If the area is deemed too small, it should not be over programmed but rather designed to serve as a “sitting” park.

Council member Marraffa, in answer to Ms. Drzyzgula’s concern about the community’s lack of awareness about the project, stated that a private fundraising effort is in the works. He noted that preliminary information regarding design and cost, information that Heath Design Group is working to provide, needs to be completed prior to moving forward. Council member Schlichting concurred, noting that fundraisers are much more successful if there are clear designs and plans in place.

In regard to the next step, Heath Design Group will use the feedback they received to finalize their design alternatives for a subsequent presentation. A final design is expected in May.